

A DAY CELEBRATING FAMILY

Just in time for Thanksgiving, four adoptions finalized for Antrim County families

By Kris Slagel
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It was an afternoon filled with smiles and tears of joy as Antrim County Circuit Court Judge Norman Hayes finalized four adoptions last Tuesday, marking Nov. 25 as the first state Adoption Day.

The event, sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court and the Family Independence Agency, was designated to thank and honor adoptive families.

"This is the best part of my job," Hayes said. "I'm glad the Legislature decided to give this part of the job to the probate/family court division."

As he addressed the audience of approximately 35, Hayes said the event is an important part of his court and other courts throughout the state.

"Adoption has a very special place in my heart because my wife was adopted," Hayes said. "And, my in-laws are very special to me because if it weren't for them, I wouldn't have ever met her or have had three beautiful children with her."

Bill Johnson, adoption program manager of the Family Independence Agency state office in Lansing, said 34 courts were finalizing adoptions of more than 240 children last Tuesday.

"There has been a tremendous effort from the courts," Johnson said. "We encourage families to consider adoption. The need is out there and these children deserve loving homes."

Coordinating the event for the Antrim County court was Sandy Churchill, deputy probate family court registrar.

As Hayes finalized each adoption, he said it was in the "best interest" of the child to stay with their respective adoptive parents.

One adoptive mother of a 2 1/2-year-old, both were present at the event, wrote a letter to the court expressing her gratitude, which Hayes read aloud:

“I never thought this day would get here,” he read. “I’ve waited three years for this day...my family is finally complete. This will be a very special Thanksgiving we will never forget.”

Another letter came from an area foster mother who said she was in a foster home when she was 15 years old. She said she wanted to give back to the system, so she became a foster parent, who has one biological child and seven adopted children. “My foster parents told me that there’s always room for one more,” she said in her letter.

Antrim/Kalkaska Family Independence Agency Director Fred Harris, along with Paula Shuler, FIA services supervisor, were present to show their support and give T-shirts and stuffed animals to the children. Also attending was Jim Scherrer, executive director of Child and Family Services of Traverse City.

Families wishing to adopt children need to be prepared to face the challenges that come with providing permanent homes for the children, Hayes said. “It’s not an easy task by any means.”

During the event, families enjoyed cake, donated by Prevo’s in Bellaire, and refreshments.

For more information on adoption, contact a local FIA office or adoption agency.



Four area families celebrated the first Michigan Adoption Day last Tuesday at Antrim County Probate Court with Antrim County Circuit Court Judge Norman Hayes, at far right.